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AUTHOR	Rasmussen, Sonja
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ABSTRACT

Intended for people who have a professional or personal interest in the elderly (researchers, public librarians, and people with elderly relations and friends), this annotated bibliography presents 34 items from the ERIC database from 1977-87 which explore aspects of reading as it relates to the elderly. The first section, an overview, is followed by a section describing reading programs for the elderly, including some in nursing homes, community centers, retirement centers, and an apartment complex, and some for individuals. The third section focuses on research on the reading habits and interests of the elderly, including reading preferences. The fourth section presents research on other issues, including factors affecting legibility of printed materials for older people, reading abilities of elderly persons in relation to the difficulty of essential government documents, and physical and psychological decrements affecting reading in the aged. Libraries and the elderly reader is the topic of the fifth section. The final section deals with literacy and instruction, discussing basic literacy and the aged, as well as the elderly college student's reading needs. (SR)

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Reading and the Elderly

by Sonja Rasmussen

As the number of elderly people in this country increases—12% of the population will be over 65 by the year 2000—issues concerning their well-being gain importance. Reading is an activity which offers the elderly many benefits: it is a means of social interaction and renewal, a source of information and current news, and a way to pass time pleasantly. This ERIC *FAST Bib*, divided into six sections, explores several aspects of reading as it relates to the elderly. Following an overview of the issue in the first section, the second section describes reading programs for institutionalized and noninstitutionalized elders. Research on reading habits and interests of the elderly is discussed in the third section, followed by other research in the fourth. The fifth section considers libraries and the elderly reader. The final section deals with literacy and instruction, discussing basic literacy and the aged, as well as other issues related to teaching the elderly reader.

The abstracts for most of these entries have been edited to allow for the inclusion of more citations. The ED numbers are included so that the user who wants information regarding reading and the elderly can go directly to microfiche collections, order from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), or go to *Resources in Education* for information on obtaining those sources not available through EDRS. The citations to journals are from the *Current Index to Journals in Education*, and these articles can be acquired most economically from library collections or interlibrary loan. Alternatively, reprint services are available from University Microfilms International (UMI) and from the Original Article Tearsheet Service (OATS) of the Institute for Scientific Information.

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Overview

Aiex, Nola Kortner. "ERIC/Reading and the Elderly," *Journal of Reading*, v1 n3 p280-83 Dec 1987.

Reviews physical and mental factors that influence the reading habits of older Americans. Discusses their reasons for reading, reading programs for institutionalized elders, ways to encourage older people to use the public library, and other ways to motivate older people to read.

Kingston, Albert J., Jr. "Reading and the Aged: A Statement of the Problem," *Educational Gerontology*, v4 n3 p205-07 Jul 1979.

Reading behavior of retired persons tends to closely reflect previous reading habits, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.

Wilson, Molly M. "Future Shock and the Aged: Is Reading a Cure or Part of the Problem?" Paper presented at the 27th Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference, 1977. 9p. [ED 150 565]

Suggests that reading offers a partial solution to the adaptation problems that older adults must face, by providing a means of disseminating infor-

mation and offering a source for consumer services information and basic education in living.

Wolf, Ronald E. "What is Reading Good For? Perspectives from Senior Citizens," *Journal of Reading*, v21 n1 p15-17 Oct 1977.

A study regarding the leisure time reading behavior of 249 elderly persons indicated that reading is a positive coping factor for older persons.

Reading Programs

Bond, Carole L.; Miller, Marilyn J. *A Survey of Reading Programs for the Institutionalized Elderly*, 1985. 9 p.
[ED 259 321]

Surveys the need for and content of reading services for residents of nursing homes. Suggests that a designated full- or part-time nursing home librarian, managing a core of volunteers specifically for reading aloud to residents, could be an asset to resident care and morale.

Culpepper, Virginia. "She Helps Kids with Own Library," *Reading Teacher*, v32 n2 p158-59 Nov 1978.

The manager of a large apartment complex in Valdosta, Georgia, started a library on the premises in order to encourage reading by children and senior citizens living in the complex.

Gentile, Lance M.; McMillan, Merna. "Reading: A Means of Renewal for the Aged," *Educational Gerontology*, v4 n3 p215-22 Jul 1979.

Describes a model reading program designed to motivate the elderly to seek intellectual, physical, or spiritual renewal through reading-related exercises. Offers a bibliography for such a reading program.

Jolly, Nancy. "Adult Reading Plans: Enjoyment, Enrichment and Inquiry," *Reading Horizons*, v18 n3 p203-08 1978.

Discusses ways in which reading can enrich adults' lives, aid in problem-solving, and provide information on many vital issues; shows how adults can develop plans for purposeful reading.

Lehr, Fran. "Reading Programs for the Older Adult,"

Journal of Reading, v28 n3 p276-78 Dec 1984.

Offers descriptions of reading programs created for the elderly in community centers and retirement and nursing homes.

Lovelace, Terry. "Reading Activities to Enhance the Lives of Nursing Home Patients," *Educational Gerontology*,
v4 n3 p239-43 Jul 1979.

Investigates the use of reading activities in the enhancement of the lives of nursing home patients. Two reading groups were formed. Short stories of high interest were read and discussed. Patients appeared to appreciate and enjoy the sessions.

Wilson, Molly M. "Enhancing the Lives of the Aged in a Retirement Center through a Program of Reading," *Educational Gerontology*, v4 n3 p245-51 Jul 1979.

Discusses the Readarama reading program, established for a community retirement center in Athens, Georgia, attended by healthy, active elderly women.

Research on Reading Habits and Interests

Carsello, Carmen J.; Creaser, James W. "Reading Attitudes and Problems of the Elderly." Paper presented at the 2nd Annual Meeting of the American Reading Forum, 1981. 17p. [ED 210 653]

Reports on a study of 106 elderly adults in the Chicago, Illinois, area, to identify attitudes towards reading, recognition and comprehension problems, reading behaviors, and physical and psychological difficulties in reading. There was evidence of widespread recreational reading and survival reading skills for most adults.

Drotter, Molly Wilson. "The Preferences of a Selected Group of Older Readers for Five Biographical Short Stories." Paper presented at the 30th Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference, 1980. 16p.
[ED 198 502]

Examines the reading interests of a group of 16 older adults regarding reading preferences, reading habits and interests, and appealing elements of the stories read. Results indicated a preference for happy stories with moral characters, a wide variety of reading interests, and a continuing interest in reading into older adulthood.

Duncan, Patricia H.; Goggin, William F. "A Profile of the Lifetime Reader: Implications for Instruction and Resource Utilization." Paper presented

at the 26th Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association, 1982. 14p. [ED 223 994]

Identifies the profile of the active older lifelong reader, through in-depth taped interviews with 23 retired individuals. Profiles include educational levels, impressions of recalled reading instruction, family influences, favorite childhood books, and reading interests and patterns over the years.

Harvey, Rhonda L.; Dutton, Donnie. "Reading Interests of Older Adults," *Educational Gerontology*, v4 n3 p209-14 Jul 1979.

Research concerning reading interests of older adults indicates that they do not enjoy science fiction, depressing books, books that contain sex or violence, or books that have confusing plots or many characters.

Heisel, Marsel; Larson, Gordon. "Literacy and Social Milieu: Reading Behavior of the Black Elderly," *Adult Education Quarterly*, v34 n2 p63-70 Win 1984.

Reports on a study that examined the literacy behavior of 132 elderly Blacks in a large city environment with a high concentration of undereducated adults. Finds that the group developed the necessary literacy skills to meet the demands of their social environment.

McLeod, Roderick Wm. "Reading Patterns of Middle-Aged and Older Canadian Book-Readers." Paper presented at the 26th Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association, 1981. 12p. [ED 208 357]

Investigates the diversity of reading behaviors reported by 3,354 middle-aged and older Canadian readers in response to a questionnaire on reading habits.

Murray, Martha S. "Older Adults and Reading, the Effect of Residential Lifestyles," *Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years*, v4 n5 p17, 31 Jan 1981.

Describes a study that surveyed the reading preferences of older adults. Noninstitutionalized older adults tend to read to gain knowledge; those who are institutionalized tend to read primarily to pass time. Suggestions, such as using large-print books, are listed to improve the reading habits of both groups.

Ngandu, Kathleen M.; O'Rourke, Bill. "Reading Attitudes, Habits, Interests, and Motivations of the Elderly." Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association, 1979. 12 p. [ED 181 416]

Presents information about 267 older adults' reading habits, reading materials, time spent reading daily, time spent watching television, reading interests, preferred television shows, and reading motivations.

Scales, Alice M.; Biggs, Shirley A. "Reading Habits of Elderly Adults: Implications for Instruction," *Educational Gerontology*, v3 n6 p521-32 1987.

Presents results of a survey of 49 elderly adults regarding reading skills, reading preferences, physical functions, attention span/concentration, and emotional well-being.

Other Research

Lovelace, Terry. *The Influence of Psychophysiological Variables on Aged Subjects' Functional Reading Achievement*, 1979. 18 p. [ED 219 716]

Investigates the effects of selected psychophysiological factors known to affect cognitive functioning on the reading achievement of 34 noninstitutionalized older adults. Finds that aging "per se" does not affect cognitive functioning as it relates to functional reading ability.

Vanderplas, James M.; Vanderplas, Jean H. "Some Factors Affecting Legibility of Printed Materials for Older Adults," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, v50 n3 pt1 p923-32 Jun 1980.

Reading speed and acceptance rates were obtained as a function of type size, type style, line width and line spacing in two experiments with older adults.

Walmsley, Sean A.; Allington, Richard L. "Reading Abilities of Elderly Persons in Relation to the Difficulty of Essential Documents," *Gerontologist*, v22 n1 p36-38 Feb 1982.

Tests 90 elderly persons for their reading ability and analyzes 126 documents from seven service agencies for their readability. Indicates that two-thirds of the sample had reading abilities lower than eighth grade, whereas 98 % of the documents had readability levels at or above ninth grade.

Walmsley, Sean A.; Allington, Richard. "Aging Research in Higher Education: Research in Reading Processes of the Elderly (Problems and Promise)," *Reading Psychology*, v1 n3 p177-83 Sum 1980.

Considers three issues related to the conduct of research into reading problems of the elderly: (1) the lack of federal funding of literacy research concerning the elderly; (2) differences between conducting research with school-aged populations and with the elderly; and (3) problems encountered in testing elderly individuals.

Walmsley, Sean A.; and others. "Effects of Document Simplification on the Reading Comprehension of the Elderly," *Journal of Reading Behavior*, v13 n3 p237-48 Fall 1981.

Reports that the readability level of a document is a poor indicator of its likely comprehension by aged subjects and that simplifying the language of documents may not be sufficient to ease comprehension difficulties.

Wilson, Molly M. "Physical and Psychological Decrements Affecting Reading in the Aged." Paper presented at the 30th Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference, 1980. 11p. [ED 199 633]

Discusses physical and psychological decrements affecting the ability of the elderly to read. Presents ways to compensate for and overcome such decrements.

Libraries and the Elderly Reader

Kamin, Judith. *How Older Adults Use Books and the Public Library: A Review of the Literature. Occasional Papers Number 165.* Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL, 1984.
38 p. [ED 247 954]

Synthesizes and analyzes research from the past 20 years on older adults' use of books and the public library.

Polk, W. Ben; and others. "Serving Our Senior Citizens," *Illinois Libraries*, v69 n5 p324-52 May 1987.

Discusses the special information needs of older adults and library services designed to meet those needs, focusing on problems of mobility, and visual and hearing impairments.

Literacy/Instruction

Jacobs, Bella; Ventura Merkel, Catherine. *Update on Healthy Aging: Reading Material on Health Topics for the New Reader and Tutor. Literacy Education for the Elderly Project.* National Council on the Aging, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1986. 56p. [ED 286 000]

Fifteen lessons contain low-vocabulary, high-interest reading materials on health issues to enhance the learning of the new older reader. Each lesson is preceded by tutor guidelines with specific goals and objectives, and review exercises.

Kasworm, Carol; Courtenay, Bradley C. "Functional Literacy in Older Adults: Proactive Approaches to Research and Teaching." Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference, 1982. 30p.
[ED 229 559]

Reports on two research projects examining the current and future needs of older adults for functional literacy and analyzing the involvement of Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs to better serve those needs. Discusses key strategies for effective instruction in functional literacy skills and student recruitment strategies.

Kingston, Albert J. "Does Literacy Really Enhance the Lives of the Elderly?" *Reading World*, v20 n3 p169-71 Mar 1981.

Argues that adult literacy programs should be structured so that reading becomes a way to enhance the lives of the elderly.

Kingston, Albert J., Jr. "The Study and Reading Needs of the Elderly College Student." Paper presented at the 2nd Annual Meeting of the American Reading Forum, 1981. 8p. [ED 210 640]

Reading instructors can assist the elderly student to become aware of and to employ various organizational aids and reading strategies.

Mattran, Kenneth J. "Breaking through the Decoding Barrier: A Case Study in Adult Literacy." Paper presented at the Conference of the Commission on Adult Basic Education, 1981. 22p. [ED 203 131]

Describes a case study in which an application of Goodman's Psycholinguistic Guessing Game model of reading was successfully attempted with an elderly illiterate woman.

Rigg, Pat; Kazemek, Francis. *Literacy and Elders: What We Know and What We Need to Find Out*, 1980. 14 p.
[ED 221 834]

Reviews research about the literacy of the aged. Supports literacy instruction that stresses the importance of social interaction, and allows el-

ders to participate in the actual program planning.

ERIC Clearinghouse on
Reading and Communication Skills
Indiana University
Smith Research Center
2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 150
Bloomington, IN 47405
(812) 855-5847

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